



NEWS RELEASE

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Man Charged with Capital Murder for Wife's Killing in 1992

A 42-year-old man accused of hiring another to stage a robbery and kill his wife is scheduled to be arraigned today, the Los Angeles County District Attorney's Office announced.

Morrad Modle Ghonim (dob 1/25/73) has been charged with one count of murder in case VA138935. The felony complaint includes special circumstance allegations of lying in wait and murder for financial gain, as well as a gun allegation.

The defendant is expected to be arraigned today at the Los Angeles County Superior Court, Downey Branch. He currently is being held on no bail.

Deputy District Attorney Robert Villa, who is assigned to the case, said on July 23, 1992, Vicki Ghonim, 17, was in a car with her infant son and husband, Morrad Ghonim, at Creek Park in La Mirada.

While at the park, an unknown person walked up to their vehicle. The person attempted to rob them, and then fatally shot her, the prosecutor said.

The case remained unsolved for more than 15 years. In 2009, authorities received a DNA hit that linked Leon Martinez, 42, to the killing. He was arrested on Oct. 20, 2010.

Evidence presented during Martinez's trial revealed that Morrad Ghonim reportedly paid Martinez \$500 to stage a robbery and carry out the murder, the prosecutor said.

On March 12, a jury convicted Martinez of first-degree murder and found true special circumstance allegations of lying in wait and murder for financial gain. A special allegation that Martinez personally used a handgun also was found to be true.

Martinez is scheduled to be sentenced on Sept. 16 at the Los Angeles County Superior Court, Norwalk Branch.

More than a month after Martinez's conviction, prosecutors charged Morrad Ghonim in connection with Vicki Ghonim's death.

At the time of the filing, Morrad Ghonim was living in the Caribbean island of Antigua. Last month, he was apprehended by law enforcement and returned to the U.S.

If convicted as charged, Morrad Ghonim faces the death penalty or life in state prison without the possibility of parole. The decision on whether to seek the death penalty will be made at a later date.

The case is being investigated by the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department.

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About the Los Angeles County District Attorney's Office

Los Angeles County District Attorney Jackie Lacey leads the largest local prosecutorial office in the nation. Her staff of nearly 1,000 attorneys, 300 investigators and 800 support staff members is dedicated to seeking justice for victims of crime and enhancing public safety. Last year, the [Los Angeles County District Attorney's Office](#) prosecuted more than 71,000 felony defendants and nearly 112,000 misdemeanor defendants.